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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to understand students' perceptions of needs for counseling personal, academic, and career problems, and to realize students' preferences of counseling strategies with respect to these three problem domains. Freshman students at the National Pingtung Teachers College were given the "Needs for Counseling Questionnaire." The results indicated that students' perceived eight items as most important in motivating them to seek help. They were: (1) courses, credits, and internship information; (2) career decision-making skills; (3) special training for a specific job; (4) work adjustment; (5) courses taking; (6) job training and license exam information; (7) report writing; and (8) future job alternatives. Five of the eight items are career problems that indicate students need more help in this area. It concludes that students' help seeking behaviors were different for different types of problems. For personal problems, the way of individual counseling was preferred. For career problems, information providing was the popular method, while for academic problems, both individual counseling and information providing were preferred. (JDM)

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HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIORS OF THE COLLEGE STUDENTS IN TAIWAN

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INTRODUCTION

Help-seeking behaviors might be different from culture to culture. The Chinese people tend to be uncomfortable to disclose self to others, especially when they are expected to share the negative feelings to a stranger. Therefore, counseling might not be a popular way for them to solve the problems. They might share those feelings to their friends instead of to a stranger. For Chinese, "face" is an important value to them. Parents always want to be proud of the children and how can an individual share their failures to others! People unfamiliar to the professional counseling would not seek for help through the counseling methods. If the problems encountered by an individual are not so personal, they might ask for help. Information providing will be a good way to satisfy their needs to solve their impersonal problems.

Pliner and Brown (1985) surveyed the university students' perceptions of stressful events in four different domains: academic, family, financial, and personal. The results indicated significant differences among ethnic groups in different domains of problems. However, the Asian-American group did not show high neends for counseling services compared to other ethnic groups. This might be to do with the value "face" aforementioned. Another study also showed significant differences among different groups with respect to people's help-seeking behaviors (Lin, Inui, and Kleinman, & Womack, 1982). Mau and Jepsen (1990) compared the students' perceptions of problems among Chinese and American students. The results indicated that American students tended to perceive problems as being more serious than did Chinese students, except for the vocational and educational problems. This again implied that the Chinese people tended to keep the personal problems in mind so as to save their 'face." Or they really put more emphasis on the importance of the academic and career types of problems in comparison to personal problems.

To understand the students' perceptions of counseling needs in different domains of problems would be important for the school Counseling Centers to make plans. The students' preferences of counseling methods will also influence the effectiveness of counseling. The purposes of the study were (1) to understand the students' perceptions of needs for counseling in personal, academic, and career problems and (2) to realize the students' preferences of counseling strategies with respect to the three problem domains.

METHOD

Subjects. The subjects were 137 freshmen at the National Pingtung Teachers College. Part of them are government-supported and would be assigned a teaching job in elementary schools after their graduations. Part of them have to pay tuition and fees and have to find a teaching job by themselves if they want to teach in elementary schools. Of the 137 students, 93 of them are

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government supported and 44 are self-supported. Besides, 54 are males and 83 are females.

Instrument. The author developed the "Needs for Counseling Questionnaire", which were divided into two parts, perceptions of counseling needs and help seeking behaviors. All the subjects were asked to answer 43 questions in three areas: personal problems, academic problems, and career problems. The format of the questionnaire in perception part was a 4-point Likert scale with 1 indicated not important and 4 indicated very important. While in the Help-seeking Behavior part, there were 7 alternatives which indicated ways students can get help from the Counseling Services on campus. They were individual counseling, group counseling, table discussion, lecture, information providing, psychological testing, and other ways. The subjects were asked to indicate which way they prefer with respect to the 41 problems they encountered. Cronbach α coefficients based on the 137 students in this study were respectively .88, .94, and .89 for the personal, academic, and career problem scales.

Data analysis. Percentages for counseling needs and different types of help-seeking behaviors for each of the items were calculated. One-way ANOVA was also used to test the gender differences on the students' perceptions of needs for help in three types of problems.

RESULTS

The students' perceptions of counseling services. Table 1 indicated the students' perceptions of counseling services on campus. Of all the counseling problems, the 8 items students perceived most important that motivate them to seek help were as follows. Values included in parenthesis represent percentage important and very important perceived by the students.

Courses, credits, and internship information providing (88.3)
Career decision-making skills (87.5)
Special training for a specific job (83.9)
Work adjustment (81.1)
Courses taking (79.5)
Job training and license exam information (78.1)
Report writing (78.1)
Future job alternatives (77.4)

Five of the eight items are career problems. It indicates that the students need more help in the area of career counseling. Personal problems were not included in the top eight items.

Gender differences on three domains of problems. With respect to gender differences, the results of oneway ANOVA indicated significant differences between male's and female's perceptions of counsleing needs in all the three aspects of problems. For personal counseling, $F(1, 135)=5.38$, $p<.05$; for academic problems, $F(1,135)=7.80$, $p<.05$; and for career counseling problems, $F(1,135)=5.99$, $p<.05$. From the mean values in table 2, we can identify that females got greater means than males in all the three aspects of problems. It shows that females perceived greater needs for help in all three aspects of problems.

Perceptions of counseling services with respect to government support or self support. All the students in teachers colleges were government-supported and did not have to pay tuition and fees several years ago. Now, half of the students in teachers college have to pay tuition and fees and also have to find a teaching job by themselves after their graduation. All the government-supported students can be assigned a teaching job in elementary school once they graduate. However, the

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results of oneway ANOVA indicated no significant differences between the two groups of students in all three aspects of problems. The mean scores in table 3 indicated that government-supported students were more concerned about academic problems. Self-supported students, on the other hand, were more concerned about personal and career problems.

Help-seeking behaviors in the three domains of problems. The right part of table 3 were the students' preferences in ways of seeking help in the three aspects of problems. With respect to personal counseling, the students prefer the method of individual counseling. For academic problems, both individual counseling and information providing were preferred methods. For career problems, most of the students preferred the way of information providing. However, for the problems of goal setting and career planning, the subjects preferred the method of indvidual counseling. Psychological testing was the preferred way for students to understand their aptitudes and interests.

In conclusion, the students' help seeking behaviors were different in different types of problems. For personal problems, the way of individual counseling was preferred. For career problems, information providing was the popular method. And for academic problems, both individual counseling and information providing were preferred.

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Table 1
Students' perceptions of counseling needs and preferences of counseling methods

	Perceptions of Needs				Preference of Methods						
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Personal Problems:											
Time arrangement	15.3	25.5	38.7	20.4	27.7	13.9	10.9	15.3	17.5	11.7	2.9
Self-understanding	10.9	18.2	41.6	29.2	41.6	9.5	5.8	7.3	4.4	28.5	2.9
Self-assertativeness	12.4	20.4	34.3	32.8	40.1	10.9	13.9	14.6	7.3	9.5	3.6
Relationship with teachers	13.9	40.1	33.6	12.4	27.0	18.2	17.5	16.8	8.8	3.6	8.0
Self-acceptance	21.2	30.7	29.2	19.0	40.1	13.9	9.5	10.2	9.5	9.5	7.3
Stress coping	10.2	24.1	40.9	24.8	34.3	16.1	12.4	16.8	10.9	5.1	4.4
Interpersonal relationships	8.7	21.2	42.3	27.7	24.1	21.2	18.2	23.4	5.8	3.6	3.6
Oral-presentaiton	8.0	15.3	29.9	46.7	23.4	16.8	19.7	19.7	15.3	2.9	2.2
Homesick feelings	27.0	28.5	29.9	14.6	40.1	12.4	10.2	13.1	8.0	5.1	10.9
Emotions expressiveness	14.6	17.5	44.5	23.4	26.2	21.2	24.1	11.7	7.3	2.9	6.6
Value clarification	11.6	14.6	40.1	33.6	26.3	21.2	12.4	10.2	5.8	19.7	4.4
Self-dignity	18.2	26.3	29.9	25.5	46.7	13.1	10.2	8.8	7.3	8.0	5.8
Extracurriculum activities	9.5	32.1	34.3	24.1	22.6	13.9	19.7	17.5	13.9	5.1	7.3
Self-awareness	11.6	22.6	33.6	32.1	38.7	13.9	14.6	5.1	5.1	16.8	5.8
Family relationship	20.5	23.4	34.3	21.9	27.7	18.2	13.1	19.0	8.8	5.8	7.3
Sexual education	7.3	21.2	46.7	24.8	14.6	13.1	20.4	27.0	19.0	2.9	2.9
Physical problems	21.2	26.3	36.5	16.1	35.0	13.1	13.1	16.1	10.2	5.1	7.3
Heterosexual problems	13.1	28.5	35.0	23.4	38.0	15.3	15.3	12.4	5.1	5.8	8.0
Leisure activities	12.4	26.3	38.0	23.4	19.7	13.1	13.9	21.2	18.2	4.4	9.5
Academic Problems:											
Test anxiety	16.1	31.4	30.7	21.9	41.6	17.5	8.8	10.2	13.1	5.8	2.9
Courses, credits, and internship information	6.6	5.1	38.7	49.6	12.4	10.2	17.5	11.7	44.5	2.2	1.5
Learning strategies	10.9	23.4	43.1	22.6	20.4	18.2	19.7	14.6	20.4	3.6	2.9
Coping to professor's teaching strategies	16.1	25.5	36.5	21.9	24.8	24.8	20.4	11.7	9.5	3.6	5.1
Major deciding	29.2	21.2	26.3	23.4	35.0	8.8	16.8	15.3	16.1	2.2	5.8
Learning ability increasing	10.2	21.2	46.7	21.9	24.1	18.2	16.8	16.8	17.5	2.9	3.6
Advanced learning planning	10.9	14.6	38.0	36.5	23.4	13.1	18.2	23.4	17.5	1.5	2.9
Conference information	9.5	13.1	54.7	22.6	11.7	8.8	8.0	11.7	56.9	1.5	1.5
Library utilization	10.9	16.8	44.5	27.7	17.5	16.8	13.1	11.7	35.0	2.9	2.9
Reading abilities	13.1	16.8	38.0	32.1	26.3	13.9	16.8	20.4	13.9	2.2	6.6
Overseas learning plan	8.7	16.8	35.0	39.4	10.2	7.3	9.5	15.3	49.6	4.4	3.6
Courses taking	5.1	15.3	39.4	40.1	19.0	13.1	21.2	15.3	24.1	5.1	2.2
Report writing	8.7	13.1	35.0	43.1	16.1	18.2	16.1	17.5	25.5	2.2	4.4
Study Planning	14.6	26.3	38.0	21.2	23.4	14.6	16.1	19.0	19.7	2.2	5.1

(Table Continues)

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Table 1. (Continued)

	Perceptions of Needs				Preference of Methods						
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Career Development Problems:											
Career planning	9.5	16.8	48.9	24.8	25.5	16.8	13.1	23.4	15.3	4.4	1.5
Career and family life balancing in the future	11.9	13.7	38.7	35.8	20.4	16.8	17.5	29.2	10.9	2.9	2.2
Work adjustment	5.8	13.1	45.3	35.8	20.4	17.5	24.8	20.4	13.9	0.7	2.2
Future job alternatives	8.0	14.6	39.4	38.0	18.2	10.9	16.8	28.5	22.6	2.2	0.7
Job training and license exam information	8.0	13.9	38.7	39.4	13.1	8.0	19.7	8.0	47.4	0.7	2.9
Career decision making	5.8	6.6	32.8	54.7	15.3	11.7	19.7	21.9	26.3	4.4	0.7
Aptitude and interest understanding	13.1	12.4	45.3	29.2	28.5	13.9	6.6	6.6	4.4	37.2	2.9
Special training for a job	6.6	9.5	41.6	42.3	19.0	14.6	18.2	23.4	19.0	3.6	2.2
Goal setting	8.8	19.0	44.5	27.7	28.5	14.6	19.7	12.4	10.9	8.0	5.8
Part-time job opportunities	8.8	19.7	45.3	26.3	25.5	9.5	8.0	7.3	40.1	3.6	5.8

Note. For perceptions of needs, 1=not important at all, 2=a little bit important, 3=important, and 4=very important. For help-seeking behaviors, 1=individual counseling, 2=group counseling, 3=table discussion, 4=lecture, 5=information providing, 6=psychological testing, and 7=other ways. All values represent percentage in different categories.

Table 2

Means and standard deviations of counseling needs on three aspects of counseling services

	Perceptions of Counseling Needs		
	Personal Problems	Academic Problems	Career Problems
Gender			
Males (N=54)			
M	54.11	37.76	34.96
SD	15.79	10.42	9.17
Females (N=83)			
M	59.70	42.01	38.06
SD	12.30	7.40	5.65
Tuition Policy			
Government-Supported (N=93)			
M	57.41	40.63	39.70
SD	13.18	8.45	7.10
Self-Supported (N=44)			
M	57.68	39.70	37.25
SD	15.73	9.93	8.00

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